

IT'S ALL GREEK TO ME!

THEME ACTIVITY:

Grade level: 6-9

Time needed: 1-2 class periods

Subject Areas: Science, Language



Objectives: To learn about what prevents chimps from speaking vocally and how sign language is so applicable to their culture. To introduce students to some signs that are used by the chimpanzees at CHCI.

Materials: "Chimpanzee Language" handout, Sign Language sheets

Activity:

Read the handout in class. To check for comprehension, ask the following discussion questions:

- What is one difference specified between chimpanzees and humans?
(Viki couldn't speak vocally)
- Why were Viki's words hard to understand?
(she had a heavy chimp accent: guttural, voiceless sounds)
- How do chimps and humans express their emotions vocally?
(food bark for chimps, saying "ouch" when hurt)
- What were some observations that led researchers to believe that sign language would be more applicable for chimpanzees?
(gestured naturally in the wild, natural behaviors of chimpanzees complimented sign language)
- What is an example of signs that were put together to represent something new?
(BIRD-MEAT/turkey, NUT-BERRY-PAPER/fruit leather, WATER-BIRD/swan, and CRY-HURT-FOOD/radish)

Review some signs in the Sign Language sheets. Have students practice them as a class and then in partners.

Have students try a sign in front of a small group and have students identify what word is being signed.

Extension:

Learn more sign language through sign language instructional books! Have student's practice carrying on conversations in sign language.